

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Webb, James Milton (1847 – 1849)

Pastors of First Baptist Shelby

2021

Rev. James Webb and the Webb Home - Dropped Stitches in Rutherford History

Clarence Griffin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/first-baptist-shelby-james-milton-webb>

DROPPED STITCHES IN RUTHERFORD HISTORY

By CLARENCE GRIFFIN
Director, North Carolina Department of
Archives And History

REV. JAMES WEBB AND THE WEBB HOME

One mile northeast of Ruth, on U. S. No. 221, stands the old Webb homestead, now the property of Mrs. O. Max Gardner, Judge Yates Webb and others of the family.

The exact age of the home is not known, however, from outward appearances and known facts, Rev. James M. Webb constructed the large, two-story house somewhere around 1825. Although occupied by tenants for the past several years, it is still in a good state of repair. The home is constructed of huge, wide timbers, two stories in height and box-shaped, with an ell at the rear, after the fashion of homes constructed in the 1820's period.

Rev. James Milton Webb was a man of many talents and a character of prominence and of outstanding ability. He was a minister of the gospel, clerk of the superior court, a representative in the North Carolina General Assembly, and a newspaper editor and publisher. He combined these widely divergent occupations in a harmonious manner, and there was one time in his career when he was a newspaper editor, minister and clerk of the court at the same time.

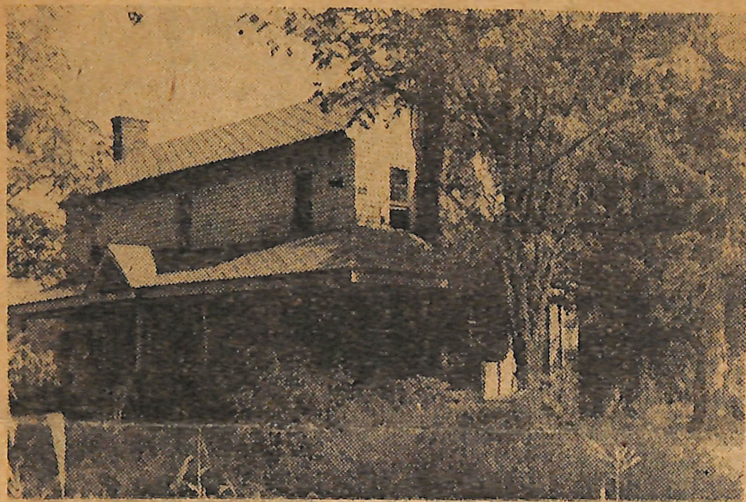
Webb was born in Rutherford county October 12, 1802. He grew to young manhood on the farm, and the first years of his life were perhaps no more eventful than those of many other young men of his day. He, however, secured an education beyond that available to others of his time. He was elected to the General Assembly when twenty-six years of age, and represented Rutherford in the house of commons for three terms of one year each, in 1828, 1830 and 1831. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1834. He had been called to the ministry prior to that date, and in 1833 he was elected pastor of Concord Baptist church. He continued as pastor of that church until December 9, 1848.

He was twice married, first to Miss Katherine White and to this union were born thirteen children, ten sons and three daughters. The first Mrs. Webb died September 30, 1848 at the age of thirty-nine years. She sleeps beside her husband in the family cemetery, located in the garden a few yards from the old home which he built. His second wife was Miss Nancy Hampton whom he married May 3, 1849. Two sons and one daughter were born to them.

One of the sons was Rev. George M. Webb, a noted Baptist minister, who was the father of the late Judge

James L. Webb and Judge E. Y. Webb, of Shelby.

In 1833 James M. Webb was elected clerk of the Superior court of Rutherford county to succeed James Morris. He was the county's second superior court clerk,



OLD WEBB HOME

and he held this position, giving universal satisfaction, until his resignation in November, 1849, occasioned by ill health.

In May, 1841 he acquired the newspaper plant of the old Carolina Gazette, at Rutherfordton, and commenced the publication of The Rutherfordton Intelligencer. He was a militant editor and took a strong position towards both religion and politics. He edited and published this paper until about May, 1843, doing the multitude of duties connected with a country weekly newspaper in addition to his duties as Clerk of the court and minister of the gospel. In the issue of April 26, 1843, Webb says:

"The editor having (for reasons which will hereafter be given) conveyed away his entire interest in the newspaper establishment known as The Rutherfordton Intelligencer, informs his kind patrons that his Editorial labors will terminate with the completion of the present volume early in May next."

Ill health and numerous other duties were attributed as his reasons for selling.

James M. Webb was known as one of the leading Baptist ministers of his day. He was described as being about six feet tall slender in height, somewhat stooped, had large black eyes, and the mouth of an orator. His hair was long, black and straight. According to the Baptist historian, John R. Logan, Webb preached the memorial sermon in memory of Rev. Drewery Dobbins, at the Broad River Baptist Association 1847 session held at Zoar church in Cleveland county. Dobbins was known as the father of the Baptist denomination in Rutherford and Cleveland counties. His text was "My Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, and they saw him no more." 2nd Kings, 2:12. Logan thus describes his address:

"He commenced his sermon by presenting a singular combination of historical and textual parts of his discourse. He then proceeded to illustrate his subject and enforce its claims in view of the occasion on which he spoke. The congregation was soon melted by his pathos and the clearness of his thoughts and were prepared to weep tears like dew drops when the preacher turned half around from the bookboard, raising his hands and eyes, and in one of those exclamations for which he was inimitable, said, "O! Dobbins, doest thy sainted spirit this day witness our feeble efforts to honor thy sacred memory? Art thou with the man that returned and smote the waters of Jordan with the mantle!" Every spirit felt subdued before him, and for thirty minutes more he lifted them up or let them down at his will, no man assisting him."

Shortly afterwards this incident was related of him. Two men not Christians, were talking rather lightly of a revival sermon, says Logan, and a sermon of Webb's was mentioned. One said to the other: "I think I saw you crying." "Yes," replied the other, "that man Webb can make the Devil cry."

He wrote the circular letters for Broad River Baptist Association in 1837 and 1839. He served as the first moderator of the Green River Baptist Association. He died April 24, 1854, and is buried in the garden near his old home beyond Ruth. Beside him sleep his first wife and a daughter and an infant.

Judge James L. Webb, of the North Carolina superior court, a grandson of James Milton Webb, was born about five miles south of Forest City on November 12, 1853, at the Rev. George Webb home, near the old Rutherfordton-Shelby road, at Webb's Ford across Second Broad river. When fifteen years of age Rev. George Webb moved his family to Shelby, where Judge Webb completed his preliminary education. He later entered Wake Forest College and after graduating from that institution he returned to Shelby and with the late W. C. Durham began the publication of the Shelby Banner. A few years later he began the study of law in the law offices of Capt. Plato Durham, and two years later entered private law school in Yadkin county. He was licensed to practice law in 1877.

Judge Webb filled many offices of trust during his long career of public service. He served as an alderman and mayor of the city of Shelby; state senator two terms, post office inspector, district solicitor for twelve years and a judge of the superior court for twenty-five years, until his death.